

Poetic Conceptualization of Sufi Terminology: 'Ishq', 'Fano', 'Haqiqat', 'Zuhd', 'Haqq'

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Abstract: This article explores the poetic conceptualization of five pivotal Sufi terms: 'Ishq', 'Fano', 'Haqiqat', 'Zuhd', and 'Haqq'. The study aims to identify their metaphorical and ontological load in classical Uzbek Sufi poetry and trace contextual variations in English translations. Applying discourse analysis and cultural translation theory, it highlights the semantic shifts and poetic transformations these terms undergo across languages. The findings are summarized in a comparative matrix, revealing the unique symbolic intensity and spiritual abstraction embedded in each term.

Keywords: Sufism, poetic conceptualization, 'Ishq', 'Fano', ontology, metaphor, cultural translation



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1. Introduction

The poetic language of Sufism is inherently symbolic, rooted in metaphysical abstraction and inner experience. In classical Uzbek literature, particularly in the works of Navoi, Jomiy, and other mystic poets, Sufi terms such as '*Ishq*' (divine love), '*Fano*' (annihilation of the self), and '*Haqq*' (Ultimate Truth) transcend their lexical meanings, functioning as complex metaphors for spiritual transformation.

This study investigates how these terms are poetically conceptualized and recontextualized in English translations. Through the framework of cultural translation (Bhabha, Bassnett, Venuti), the article discusses the connotative richness of these terms and the difficulty of transmitting their full ontological weight into another language.

2. Materials and Methods

Corpus:

- Classical Uzbek poetry (Alisher Navoi, Ahmad Yassavi, Mashrab)
- English translations of Sufi poetry (Coleman Barks, Reynold Nicholson, Annemarie Schimmel)

Methodology:

- **Discourse analysis** to reveal metaphorical structures.
- **Ontological mapping** to track abstract conceptualizations.
- **Comparative translation matrix** to examine contextual shifts.

3. Results

Table 1: Metaphorical and Ontological Load of Selected Sufi Terms

Term	Literal Meaning	Metaphorical Load in Uzbek Poetry	Ontological Layer	Contextual Shift in English Translation
Ishq	Love	Fire, madness, eternal longing	Divine union	Often rendered as “love” or “passion,” losing spiritual dimension
Fano	Dissolution	Candle melting, ocean merging	Ego annihilation	Translated as “nothingness,” often lacks spiritual connotation
Haqiqat	Truth/Reality	Light, mirror, hidden pearl	Divine essence	Simplified as “truth,” lacking ontological nuance
Zuhd	Asceticism	Thorns, desert, detachment	Self-purification	Rendered as “ascetic life,” losing metaphorical imagery
Haqq	Truth/God	Sun, justice, source of all being	Ultimate Reality	Reduced to “truth” or “God,” omitting philosophical richness

4. Discussion

The poetic conceptualization of Sufi terms cannot be fully captured through literal translation. Terms like ‘*Ishq*’ and ‘*Fano*’ carry spiritual heat and existential gravity that resist simplification. English renderings often flatten these terms, stripping them of metaphorical depth.

Cultural translation, as discussed by Bhabha (1994), insists on preserving cultural “in-betweenness.” However, the metaphysical density of Sufi terminology necessitates a strategy of **ontological compensation**, where poetic form and footnotes may serve as a bridge.

5. Conclusion

The analysis demonstrates that Sufi terms are densely layered with poetic and ontological significance. Successful translation requires more than semantic equivalence; it demands poetic resonance and philosophical sensitivity. Future research should explore creative translation strategies (e.g., intralingual glossing, poetic reimagining) to preserve the sacred dimensions of these cultural concepts.

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